

National Urban League
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USDED Mathematics and Science Initiative: Increasing Public Understanding

Goals of the Campaign for African American Achievement

The Campaign for African American Achievement, launched in 1997, is a data-driven mobilization and advocacy campaign to raise awareness regarding the academic and social development of children of color. The Campaign seeks to create a strong infrastructure that enhances and supports young people by merging public awareness of the issues with community engagement and capacity building to develop solutions. In 2000, Early Literacy became the policy or systems change focus of the Campaign. *NUL proposes to use the umbrella of the Campaign and our established outreach and public engagement apparatus to now focus on Math.*

Summary of the Campaign for African American Achievement

The Campaign uses a Community Change Process Model. A community change process model creates an environment in which community stakeholders come together to take action and produce change. The focus is systems change rather than merely tinkering with programs. The work of the Campaign is guided by the following operating principles: identify key stakeholders; understand the issue within the community utilizing a combination of statistics, research, common-sense and real work experience; create a shared vision and set of goals for change; devise and execute an action plan that is focused, feasible and mapped out over multiple years, understanding that most effective strategies take shape and evolve over time; develop community capacity to implement the plan; and formulate a methodology for documenting, tracking and assessing progress for internal strategic planning as well as for purposes of communicating progress and lessons to the broader community.

The **Purpose of the Campaign** is raising the awareness level of parents, students and the community to understand the importance of achievement and to create a consumer demand for quality education. To date Early Literacy has been the policy focus of the Campaign. The Campaign educates parents, caregivers and the community on the scientific-based strategies that yield reading proficiency and seeks to reinforce and/or to put in place the structures and supports that enhance literacy and reading development in African-American and other children of color. The Campaign targets that segment of the community that have struggled to attain high quality education for its young people – poor and communities of color.

The Campaign accomplishes its goals in 3 ways: Awareness and Education, Advocacy and Mobilization, and Policy and Research. Using the League's extensive network of over 100 affiliates in 34 states and the District of Columbia; more than 20 national African-American partner organizations representing the faith community, including the Congress of National Black Churches; social and civic groups like members of the Pan Hellenic Council and the National Council of Negro Women; and Black professional organizations like the National Alliance of Black School Educators, the National Bar Association; NUL has engaged all segments of the community in a dialogue on achievement through materials, workshops, town hall meetings and education summits. In partnership with Scholastic, Inc., NUL developed *Read and Rise*, a parent's guide to early literacy. In its second printing, more than 700,000 guides have been distributed across the nation. The Book Awards Program has distributed 50,000; 93,000 and 164,000 children's books to families not having access to books in 2001, 2002 and 2003 respectively. While more than 500,000 parents and community members have been reached through "achievement" activities and events, more than 12,719 parents and community members have received training on key issues relating to achievement. Through a partnership with the National Newspapers Publishers Associations (NNPA) and its more than 200 African-American newspapers, a special insert on early literacy, featured articles on the topic and local stories on successful schools reached 15 million readers each week over a 2-month period. A partnership with the Ad Council is allowing NUL to run PSAs on early literacy in black radio markets. Education Summits sponsored by the local Urban League affiliates and community stakeholders have taken place in more than 30 cities with more than 15,000 participants.

Next steps in the Campaign include opening up pilot Reading Information Centers, through a grant from USDED, in 4 Urban League affiliate cities: Miami, FL; Washington, DC; Cleveland, OH; and Houston, TX. A trainers manual is being developed to compliment *Read and Rise*, the current parent's guide will be translated into Spanish and a "junior" version of the document is being developed for parents and caregivers reading on a 3rd-grade level. Plans are currently underway to expand the work done to date with work on full literacy or the development of "reading to learn" skills in this population. Working with the Education Trust 15, Urban League communities are involved in "action research" by identifying the characteristics of high-performing schools in reading/language arts that serve majority students of color and poor students. This work coupled with available scientific-based research empowers these communities to advocate for these same learning opportunities in low-performing schools.

The National Urban League has the circle of influence and multiple outreach mechanisms to engage poor and communities of color around the issue of quality mathematics education.